

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

Educational Assistance is a benefit to both the employee and to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The program provides financial assistance to employees to continue their formal education, which results in an improved workforce and helps the employee achieve his or her individual career goals. Educational assistance generally is provided for formal education programs that are taken on the personal time of the employee.

II. POLICIES

A. Source of Funds

Funds for the payment of educational assistance come from the agency's Staff Development budget.

B. Payment of Funds

Payment of funds will be made directly to the educational institution after the employee has received approval for the course(s) authorized by the State Librarian/Commissioner or his/her designee.

C. Eligibility Requirements

1. Permanent, full-time employees who are in active work status and who have satisfactorily completed the initial probationary period, or employees in the unclassified service who have completed six months of continuous service, are eligible to receive educational assistance. These requirements may be waived by the agency for specific cases when the nature of the work justifies the educational assistance. The request for waiver must be submitted in writing to the State Librarian/Commissioner showing proper justification.
2. An employee may initiate the request for educational assistance; the supervisor may suggest to the employee that specific courses might help him or her perform job duties more proficiently; or the State Librarian/Commissioner may direct that the employee undertake specific courses.
3. An employee who has an outstanding reimbursement obligation is not eligible to receive further educational assistance until the obligation is satisfied, unless:

- a. The agency determines that the incomplete resulted from circumstances beyond the employee's control; or,
- b. The employee has reimbursed the agency for the amount expended on the course.

D. Courses Must be Related to the Employee's Work

The courses must have a clear and direct relationship to the work of the agency and to the improvement of the employee's job effectiveness in his or her present position or a position in the agency to which he or she can reasonably aspire. The appropriateness of courses is to be determined by their presence on the Approved List of Courses for this agency. Requests for exceptions to the approved list shall be made in writing and subject to the approval of the State Librarian/Commissioner.

E. Approved List of Courses and/or Degree Programs

1. Generally, educational assistance may be granted to pay for courses in which college credit is earned, offered by: public or private degree granting postsecondary education institutions, educational television, accredited correspondence and on-line schools, secondary schools, and Kentucky Virtual University.
 - a. Educational testing for credit such as GED, CLEP, and DANTES are also covered by this policy.
 - b. The dollar amount per credit hour approved for educational assistance at a private college or university or an out of state college or university shall be limited to the current tuition cost at the four (4) year state university located nearest the employee's county of employment.
2. Assistance may not be granted without proper justification to cover the educational courses when the same or substantially the same course is available to the employee at less cost from another educational institution, with the exception of the procedure outlined in Section F of these policies.
 - a. Based upon the recognized training and educational needs of the workforce, the following approved list of courses has been established to meet those needs and to allow career growth opportunities for every employee. The list will be reviewed periodically and revisions made as necessary and appropriate. Recommendations concerning additions or deletions should be made to the Personnel Office.

Library Science
Audio-Visual
English

Accounting
Economics
Archival Studies

Public Speaking
Communications
Public Relations
Photography
Information Technology
Electronic Data Processing
Office Administration
Secretarial Science
Business Administration
Business Communications
Business Management
Electronics

History
Records Management
Document Preservation
Chemistry
Political Science
Statistics
Psychology
Public Affairs
Public Administration
Personnel Administration
First-Aid

Education and Special Education courses which deal specifically with Adult Education or the Blind and Physically Disabled.

This agency has chosen not to establish a list of approved degree programs.

F. Kentucky State University Requirement

Employees who live or whose work station is in Franklin or an adjoining county will receive educational assistance only for courses at Kentucky State University (KSU) unless the course required is not available or offered there. Additionally, correspondence courses may be approved for employees who live or whose workstation is in Franklin County only when a comparable course of in-class instruction is not available at Kentucky State University. This policy is based on *Kentucky's Higher Education Desegregation Plan* in response to the *U.S. Office of Civil Rights Letter of January 15, 1981; Final Revision, January 1982*, which requires that the use of state educational assistance funds be approved only for Kentucky State University courses or programs when the course or program is available and offered at KSU, unless otherwise restricted by pre-existing contractual obligations or where geographically inappropriate. *This procedure shall apply uniformly unless the Executive Director of Governmental Services Center waives the requirement for a particular course subject to Section M of these policies.*

G. Approved Expenditures

Educational assistance may be granted to pay for:

1. Tuition and routine registration fees; not to exceed \$600.00 per course for undergraduate studies and \$860.00 per course for graduate or professional studies.
2. Required texts and other required course materials, up to \$100 maximum per course.
3. Laboratory, examination fees and computer usage fees.

4. Basic and normal costs charged by the institution required for course registration.
5. Records and transcript fees if required by the institution.

Assistance will not be granted for:

1. Late registration fees and activity fees (unless required by the institution).
2. Graduation fees.
3. Parking or transportation.
4. Specific courses taken previously by the employee for which he/she received a passing grade, without prior approval for tuition assistance.

H. Maximum Allowable Hours

Agency-paid tuition and related expenditures shall be applied uniformly throughout the agency and shall not exceed the following:

Undergraduate studies -- three (3) courses for each regular session, and one (1) course for each summer or inter-session.

Graduate or professional studies -- two (2) courses for each regular session and one (1) course for each summer session or inter-session.

I. Educational Assistance Must be Authorized in Advance

To receive educational assistance, the employee must make application with his/her division director and receive approval from the State Librarian/Commissioner or his/her designee before entering the course. Approval is subject to the availability of funds. Denied applications shall be returned to the employee with a written explanation.

J. Obligation of the Employee

1. An employee who has voluntarily requested approval for and received educational assistance is obligated to complete the course for which approval was given, provide the agency with proof of a satisfactory grade for completion of the course within the deadline established, and shall continue to work on a full-time basis. KDLA will allow the use of paid leave and flexible work schedules to accommodate the employee's participation in this program provided it does not adversely impact services or employee job performance.

2. An employee shall sign the educational assistance form, which includes an agreement recognizing the employee's obligations. The agency is authorized to recover educational assistance monies expended if:
 - a. The employee's authorization form contains any material falsification.
 - b. The employee fails to provide the agency's Personnel Office, within thirty (30) calendar days after completion of the course, evidence of a satisfactory grade. Satisfactory grade is defined as a "C" for undergraduate work and a "B" for graduate studies. A grade of "I" (incomplete) is not considered a satisfactory grade. A grade of "Pass" is considered a satisfactory grade.
 - c. The course(s) is (are) dropped, regardless of cause, without prior approval of the appointing authority or his/her designee.
 - d. The employee receives duplicate payment for the same course from any other source (e.g., scholarship, veteran's educational payments, Educational Achievement Award). Courses taken through the Educational Assistance Program cannot be applied toward an Educational Achievement Award.
 - e. The employee resigns/retires or is dismissed for cause prior to completion of a six (6) month service obligation to state government after completion of the course or during the course itself. An employee who is laid-off shall not be obligated to the six (6) month service obligation clause and shall not have to repay educational assistance funds.

Employees who have been directed by the agency to take a course under the Educational Assistance Program are not required to sign authorization for recovery of funds.

K. Incompletes

Grades of "I" or incomplete may not be carried beyond thirty (30) working days beyond scheduled completion of the course, with the exceptions mentioned above. Such grades are to be regarded as unsatisfactory. The agency may require the employee reporting a grade of incomplete to repay the tuition and other expenditures made on his or her behalf.

L. Records and Forms

The agency shall maintain all records and forms associated with this program in the agency personnel file of the employee and shall forward such records to the receiving agency upon employee transfer.

M. Exceptions in the Public Interest

The State Librarian/Commissioner, with the approval of the Executive Director of the Governmental Services Center, may grant an exception to these policies if the employee justifies it to be in the public interest. A letter from the appointing authority requesting an exception to the policy must be sent to the Executive Director of the Governmental Services Center at Kentucky State University at least 10 workdays prior to the start of the course for which the exception is requested. The letter must state the nature of the exception being requested, the reasons for it, and an explanation as to why the exception would be in the public interest. The letter of approval or denial shall be kept in the employee's personnel file attached to approved education assistance forms.

N. Equal Opportunity

Positive measures shall be implemented within the Department for Libraries and Archives to ensure that neither race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, nor age are factors in selecting applicants for participation in educational assistance programs.

O. Periodic Audits

The form for educational assistance is the Educational Assistance Authorization Form (P-33). The Governmental Services Center at Kentucky State University reserves the right to audit educational assistance records within the agency to ensure compliance with the policies stated herein.

P. Application for and Approval of Educational Assistance

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| FIRST, | The employee obtains an Educational Assistance Authorization Form from the Personnel Office. |
| SECOND, | The employee completes the application portion of the authorization form and submits the form to his/her division director three weeks prior to registration. The form is to be typed to insure that all copies are legible. |
| THIRD, | The division director verifies that the course(s) are on the approved list of courses and if so, completes the supervisor's section and routes it to the Personnel Office two weeks prior to registration. |
| FOURTH, | If sufficient funds are available and the application conforms to the procedures governing educational assistance, the application will be submitted to the State Librarian/Commissioner or his/her designee for approval. |

- FIFTH, When approval has been made and educational assistance is authorized, the original and one copy will be returned to the employee, one copy will be sent to the Financial Services Office, and one copy will be retained by the Personnel Office.
- SIXTH, The employee gives the original approved copy to the educational institution at the time of registration for the course. The other copy is presented to the college bookstore when purchasing textbook(s).
- SEVENTH, Within thirty (30) workdays after scheduled completion of the course, the employee shall provide the Personnel Office with an official grade report for the course for which the educational assistance was authorized, and shall also complete the student evaluation of instruction portion of the Educational Assistance Authorization Form on file in the Personnel Office. The obligation of the employee to the agency shall not be considered fulfilled until the student evaluation of instruction has been completed.
- NOTE: Applications that involve exceptions to these policies should be submitted an additional ten days in advance to allow for proper review and consideration.**